

villages fairly astonished me; and it was not till then that I realized what a powerful and prosperous people were those whose acquaintance I was about to make.¹²⁷

We may compare this description of conditions in 1898 with that given by Trapnell for the same area in 1938.

... Reserve II presents an example of continued cutting-out, soil-destruction and erosion which probably has no equal in the Territory. ... Cattle are most numerous in this reserve, and ... their added burden on the land has doubtless helped to weigh the scales to the point of erosion. With cattle and an excessive population in Mpweni's and Mbagwa's country, surface compaction and deterioration of soil have come to give place to wholesale wash, and denuded beds of eroding land are now to be seen scored by dongas fully ten feet deep. The enormous gullied scars down the face of Nyulilini and neighbouring hills provide notable examples of the effects of millet cultivation on impossible slopes.¹²⁸

The devastation described by Trapnell has come about in part on account of the alienation of land to Whites, but it is also due to the transition which the Nguni have been forced to make from living as migrant brigands to working as sedentary cultivators and migrant labourers. Even without alienation, it is likely that the large villages would have disappeared.

The population of the tribe immediately prior to the conquest was estimated by Deane to be 40,000 and possibly more. Johnston, in his highly ambitious population density map, appears to have assumed a population of about 50,000, while an official estimate in 1898 was nearly 150,000.¹²⁹ The area of Mpweni's country was estimated by Angus to be about 400 square miles. He also delimited an area of about 2,700 square miles which he describes as 'Angoni-land proper', but it is clear that this large area includes much waterless uninhabited country. Johnston implies, on his map, an inhabited area of 3,000 square miles, but again there is clear evidence that in fact much of this was uninhabited. In 1903 it was estimated that the area within which the Ngoni kept their cattle before the conquest was about 600 square miles.¹³⁰ Angus's lower estimate is in accord with the distances between villages given by travellers

¹²⁷ Angus, 'Northern Angoni-land', p. 76.

¹²⁸ Trapnell, *Ecological Survey*, pp. 67, 71.

¹²⁹ Deane, 'Slave raiders', 11 May; *A & P*, 1894, 1-4, p. 769; *BCAG*, v, 3 (26 February 1898), p. 1.

¹³⁰ Angus, 'Northern Angoni-land', pp. 74, 78; *BCAG*, iii, 11 (1 June 1896), p. 1; *Report on the Administration*, 1903, p. 19.

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Ngoniland and the People who lived in it

The land

The little country of Nyanaland in Central Africa received its name from the lake by which Livingstone and those who followed him penetrated into the interior and reached the lands and people living round the lake. On the west side there is a narrow strip of low-lying coastal land. Then a series of escarpments begin, and up these roads and paths wind through steep wooded valleys, until the final steep leads to the grasslands of the high plateau. Here on the high plateau the Ngoni settled about the middle of the nineteenth century, after nearly forty years of trekking from Natal to Tanganyika. They turned south again at the shores of Lake Victoria and returned to this land which they had passed through on their northward march. This high plateau has great diversity of scenery, and much of it reminded the Ngoni of the hills and valleys and grasslands of Natal. There are high mountains with sharp peaks and massive granite shoulders. Between the ranges of lower grass-covered hills are shallow valleys where the rain washes down good soil to the valley bottoms. Sweeps of grassland, bare of trees, alternate with river valleys where there is a continuous flow of water, fed by springs and mountain streams.

In the dry season, from April to November, the trees lose their leaves and the grass gradually dries up till the prevailing colours are gold and brown against the black and grey

the productivity and little power of currency. Next, the weaker soils will be abandoned; each date as we have suggested that this stage is reached when grain yields fall below 200 lb. per acre in the normal season. The former occupants of the abandoned land may then offer work in exchange for the food surplus still enjoyed by the holders of the stronger soils, or they may be entitled to a share of the surplus by virtue of kinship obligations. In this way a period of increasing pressure and accelerated erosion on the stronger and more fertile soils is brought about. These stages will commonly be accompanied by migration of able-bodied men to the centres of employment and the stage finally be reached when the area is dependent to a large extent on food purchased from outside sources.

In 1941 a study was made of a highly congested area in Fort Jameson District; the area of Muganyizi, Paramount Chief of the Ngoni. The chief's territory was found to be 24,000 acres in extent and, after detailed survey, the carrying capacity for traditional Ngoni agriculture was estimated to be about 1,300 to 1,400 persons. A total of 7,700 people, however, live and six times the carrying capacity, were supposedly living within the chief's territory. In short, an area which, because of the high proportion of mountainous country, had a initial density of only about 16 persons per square mile did in fact appear to be carrying over 90 to the square mile.

The main reasons for the continued survival of this population were found to be as follows:

- (a) The time during which these conditions had existed (about 13 years) was not sufficient to show the full effects of this degree of land pressure.
- (b) Great areas of hill country and dambos, which would not normally be cultivated, had been taken into cultivation. The almost incredible mountain cultivation on the Nyassaland range was, until recently, a startling spectacle. Use of dambos for *spoke* gardens had seriously reduced grazing and was a sore point with the cattle-owning Ngoni.
- (c) Under extreme pressure the population had burst its bounds and an inviolable tide had inundated adjoining private land and unoccupied European farms. In addition, a missionary organisation had permitted cultivation, on payment, on land owned by the mission. By these means the effective acreage had, in fact, been increased by about 50 per cent.
- (d) A very heavy burden had been thrown on the limited soils of high fertility and resistance to erosion, the only soils left in the original area still carrying moderately good crops. These soils, then in continuous cultivation, were feeding more than twice as many people as they would normally do.
- (e) The Paramount Chief was importing from Nyassaland each year a considerable quantity of food for the use of his people.

THE PORT JAMBUIN MOUNT

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The present-day population of the village is about 8,000, of whom about 8,000 live in Port Jambuin and 2,000 in the Port Moresby area of New Guinea. In Port Jambuin the village is largely composed of two distinct tribes, the *Wapik* and the *Wapik*. In 1948 the density of population in these two areas averaged 18 persons to the square mile,¹ but it was estimated as only 10 persons to the square mile in 1951. Since 1951 the density has been reduced to about 10 persons to the square mile by emigration to other areas outside the village. The density of population of the Wapik area of the village was about 18 persons to the square mile in 1951.²

The region in which the Wapik live consists of a fairly flat plain about 2,000 feet above sea level, with mountain peaks averaging about 1,000 feet in height. The soil of the region is principally of the type suitable only for shifting or partial cultivation, but there are the hills of more suitable soil.³ In addition to the customary mode of agriculture, in which rice is the principal crop, the principal industry of the land has been introduced to be about 20 persons to the square mile.⁴ The annual rainfall in Port Jambuin varies from 27 to 48 inches, averaging about 32 inches. The region contains the mouth of the Laugue River and Laugue-Jambuin watershed. Most of the streams that flow down into the Laugue dry up in July, while the Jambuin and Wapik streams continue to flow somewhat longer.⁵

The natural vegetation of the region consists principally of *Brachy-
myle-Jambuin* woodlands, with larger trees along the line of streams. The mean maximum temperature for the region is about

of the Wapik-*Wapik* Indians. This account was prepared in 1948, and I am very grateful to Dr. Max Gluckman for criticism of this paper in 1951.

¹ In the 1948 Wapik census many of the people living in the two Wapik areas were classified as *Wapik*. Hence the figure of 5,110 Wapik in Port Moresby does not represent the total population of these two counties. Cf. Report on the Census, Table 4.

² Calculated from the figures given in the *Port Moresby*, p. 314. These two counties contain *Wapik* districts as well as *Wapik*, but the average population density of the two villages is probably of the same order.

³ Trapnell, *Ecological Survey*, p. 72.

⁴ *Forest, Land Resources*, pp. 47-9.

⁵ Report on the Census, Table 8. The Port Moresby District contains a *Wapik* district as well as the two Wapik. The figure given above is the average for the whole district.

⁶ Trapnell, *Ecological Survey*, p. 72.

⁷ Allen, *African Land Usage*, p. 14.

⁸ Peck, *Human Geography*, pp. 1 and 2.

Part I. *Peasants on The Side of Ngond*

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The soil of the valley is only now being turned by the Ngond. Surely this was the work of the storm. The ground is so soft and so fertile as what is found in the hills does not in the deep valleys. There is the great crop, the raising of the hills of forests for several years in succession. The Ngond has been used to plant the narrow garden of herbs, for the forest of drought can scarcely afford this crop. A great variety of vegetables is cultivated, peas, beans, tomatoes, pumpkins, and so on. I have counted a variety of twenty-two different vegetables in the gardens beside one village.

These vegetables are used as relishes, but the staple food is always white porridge. It is a tasty dish it is. The maize is well cleaned, ground into a fine flour, and when cooked by a clever woman makes a most delicious white porridge. The white may consist of a piece of animal food or goat, or well boiled vegetables. The greatest dish that was ever offered to me was a dish of truly white porridge with relishes of animal consumption. I did not think the rice as that occasion. An interesting thing about these caterpillars is that they live on the top of trees, and the rain, will blow down the tree. You can see how delicious a dish it makes if every caterpillar in the dish has been gone as the rain of trees. They take the place of the old European relishes in their fastness.

He makes this as he has eaten until he has had his porridge. A missionary who I know once certainly gave a feast to his children, feeding them on European food. They ate till they could not eat more, then they were sick, and after pulling themselves by audible sounds of misery, they rose and said, "We are now go home to our porridge."

The maize and vegetables are grown with very little trouble, but there is also a species of millet which is largely cultivated, and at great cost to the country. The ground has to be carefully prepared, then a heap of manure is put up in the field, and the branches, then when the first clouds appear, the wood is felled. For a day it rains, and then during the gathering of smoke of burning trees. The rains come and wash the carbon into the soil, and exhausts the ground in two or three years, so another patch of

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